

Inspection of a good school: Blackburn Central High School

Haslingden Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 3HJ

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 December 2022

Outcome

Blackburn Central High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend this school. They have warm and trusting relationships with staff. Pupils told inspectors that they appreciate the family atmosphere of the school, where everyone is equally valued.

Leaders and governors have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils respond positively to the challenges set for them. They enjoy learning and achieve well.

Diversity is not just tolerated at this school, it is celebrated. Pupils and staff have won national recognition for the work that they have done to promote inclusion. There is a well-established culture of respect. Bullying is rare. Leaders have systems in place to tackle any incidents of bullying or poor behaviour swiftly and effectively. Consequently, pupils are happy and safe.

Leaders have identified a wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop important skills such as resilience and communication. Roles such as senior students, form captains and the junior leadership team allow pupils to develop their leadership skills. Pupils engage with the local community through fundraising and voluntary work. They enjoy a wide variety of clubs and sports including chess, science, debating and the school choir.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have identified the knowledge that is the most important for pupils to learn. Leaders have arranged the curriculum so that it extends and deepens pupils' learning over time.

Teachers have a high level of subject knowledge. They present information with clarity and in a way which is accessible to all pupils. However, in a small number of subjects, teachers provide pupils with a narrow range of activities and resources. Pupils occasionally encounter some of the same materials in key stage 3 and key stage 4. This

limits the opportunities for pupils to strengthen their understanding by applying the knowledge that they are learning to new scenarios.

Subject leaders have designed appropriate assessment tasks to periodically check that pupils know and remember their learning over time. However, on occasion, some teachers do not check on pupils' learning and progress during lessons in an effective way. As a result, teachers do not rapidly identify and correct the misconceptions that some pupils hold. This means that some pupils are not secure in some aspects of their learning.

Leaders have established effective systems to identify and support pupils with SEND. Leaders have the same high aspirations for these pupils as for all pupils in the school. Teachers make suitable adaptations to their lessons to allow pupils with a range of needs to access the curriculum well.

Leaders have successfully promoted a love of reading throughout the school. They have identified those pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 who find reading more difficult. Well-trained staff provide effective support to these pupils. This helps them to develop their fluency and comprehension in reading.

Leaders ensure that the school is a calm and purposeful place in which to learn. Leaders have established a clear behaviour system which is consistently applied by staff. Pupils told inspectors that it was unusual for poor behaviour to disrupt their learning. Teachers deal with any incidents of poor behaviour quickly and effectively.

Leaders have planned an extensive programme of personal development. Pupils learn effectively about a range of well-chosen topics, including healthy relationships and mental well-being. This prepares them successfully for life in modern Britain. Pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 value the high-quality careers advice and guidance that they receive.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They appreciate the support of leaders and the opportunities that they provide for career development. Staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Leaders have ensured that there is a wide range of experience on the governing body. This helps governors to be effective in providing support and challenge to the leaders of the school. Trustees and governors understand their statutory duties and perform them well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have effective systems in place to record and track safeguarding concerns. They are tenacious in seeking support from external agencies. Staff are well-trained and vigilant to any signs that a pupil may need help.

Leaders are very aware of the context of the school and the challenges that some pupils face. They are proactive in their efforts to educate pupils about emerging risks. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe, including online.

Governors have received appropriate training and understand their safeguarding duties. They monitor the work of leaders in keeping pupils safe, including in matters of recruitment.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in a small number of subjects is not as broad and rich as it could be. This is because some teachers choose a narrow range of resources which are used with multiple year groups. As a result, pupils do not deepen their knowledge in some aspects of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that teachers chose appropriate resources which enable pupils to strengthen their knowledge.
- Some teachers do not check pupils' learning effectively enough in lessons. Consequently, these teachers sometimes do not know which pupils have misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should support teachers to develop a range of formative assessment strategies to enable them to quickly identify when pupils need extra help in lessons.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, also called Blackburn Central High School, good in November 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146936
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10259435
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	900
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Derek Elliott
Headteacher	Shanaz Hussain
Website	www.bchs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Blackburn Central High School converted to become an academy school in October 2019. When its predecessor school, also called Blackburn Central High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of Champion Education Trust.
- Leaders use two registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and staff. An inspector spoke with members of the local governing body, as well as the chief executive officer and the chair of the multi-academy trust.
- An inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body and trust board meetings, and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the school's single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Charlotte Oles, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Philip Wood

Ofsted Inspector

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